

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

GYPSY SORCERY AND FORTUNE TELLING.

Instructed by numerous Incantations, Specimens of Medical Magic, Anecdotes and Tales, by Charles Godfrey Leland. Copyright, 1890, by Charles Godfrey Leland. Price, \$1.00. Charles Scribner's Sons, Author.

This is a book which perhaps no other man living could have undertaken with the same preparedness; and if, after all the pains bestowed upon it, it is rather an introduction to the subject than an exhaustive review, the fact must be ascribed to the immense extent of the field to be covered.

Mr. Leland approaches his topic in a truly scientific spirit, and this is in itself a great advantage both to him and to his readers. He has assimilated that new knowledge which the student of psychology is today imperatively required to master; that experimental knowledge founded upon the data furnished chiefly by French and German men of science—data which have already revolutionized opinion concerning a wide range of obscure phenomena, and though as yet far from the finality of certitude, have taught the world to expect solutions of many occult problems in deeper analysis of the abnormal conditions of the human intelligence. Mr. Leland has penetrated one of the secrets of mediæval superstitions which was for so many generations a sealed book to the sceptical mind of Europe. The eighteenth century, in the energy of its reaction against blind credulity, altogether failed to comprehend the element of reality which pervaded the witchcraft of the middle ages, and which can alone explain to us the vitality and the persistence of the belief in the agency of malefic powers.

Modern investigators, following heedlessly in the footsteps of these iconoclastic critics, have done violence to all probability by assuming that numbers, not merely of average men, but of highly acute intelligences, were foaled by delusions so gross and palpable that a nineteenth century child would not be deceived by them. But modern science has made it necessary to review these hasty and unphilosophical judgments, by demonstrating that faith is really creative; that strong belief can work miracles, palpable and radical, extending even to the alteration of tissue, to the setting up of new functional movements, to the renewal of health in diseased parts, and to the extinction of life in the entire organism.

When belief in the powers of witchcraft was a cardinal tenet in the creed of the masses, real results flowed from it. Those who thought themselves bewitched often suffered what their imagination conceived as the normal effects of such operations; and in this way the general faith in the reality of witchcraft was confirmed, and evidence was created which could be dealt with by the courts.

The investigation of hypnotism has done more than ought also to illuminate mediæval superstition and to enable us to understand why and how fancies which now appear childishly grotesque were accepted as grim earnest by educated men no less than by the ignorant. The same influences which produced and sustained those old beliefs in witchcraft, sorcery and magic are, moreover, by no means extinct, as Mr. Leland very conclusively shows in this volume. Science and education have driven the manifestations from the surface of civilized society, but they subsist in the depths scarcely or not at all modified.

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